

A Buchan Boorach

A *Boorach* is an old North East Scot's word for an eclectic mix of things or people. In this route round Buchan district, which is defined by the area between the Ythan and Deveron, we've suggested some roads taking in a mix of interesting places to visit or to see wildlife. The route comprises some decent A and B roads and generally only uses the main arterial A90 route to link to the chosen roads.

Our starting point is somewhere on the A90 near Balmedie, whether you chose to arrive there from Bridge of Don via the A92 or via the new Northern section of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, A90.



A couple of miles after passing Balmedie on the new dual carriageway, you will see the slip off to Newburgh on the A975. The road offers a nice series of straights and bends to Newburgh. Just as you enter the village, turn off right, signposted to the golf course. You will come to a car parking area opposite to the entrance to the clubhouse. This is our first point of interest and if you park up, it's only a short walk through the sand dunes to the River Ythan where normally you will be able to spot a great number of common seals. The colony is reputed to comprise about 400 of these mammals.



Once you've finished seal spotting, get back on the A975 and head north towards and through Cruden Bay. You will see the ruined New Slains Castle on your right. Its roof was removed in 1913 by its owner to avoid taxes and the building has since fallen into disrepair. It is said that Bram Stoker stayed here in the late 19th century which inspired him to write his 1897 novel, *Dracula*.

About 1 mile further on, stop at the small parking area. This is our 2nd stopping point of interest as its only a short walk again to the Bullers o' Buchan, a dramatic collapsed sea cave but beware, the cliffs are sheer and its not for the faint hearted on a blustery day. Be especially careful if you've kids or a dog with you as some of the paths are very narrow with sheer drops either side.



Next, we're off to Peterhead by joining the A90 just 1 mile or so beyond the Bullers. At the first roundabout, take the 3rd exit and then immediately left, till you come to the old Peterhead Prison, which is now a museum.

This was built by convicts, who quarried the stone to build, not only the prison itself but also Peterhead harbour breakwaters. Our 3rd stop is a very interesting visit where you learn how prisoners lived in the various periods during the prison's infamous history. The original prison officers now act as guides and relate some pretty horrific tales of life inside the jail which was home to some of the most notorious hardened criminals in Scotland.



Once you get released, get back on the A90 and head north towards Fraserburgh. You pass the St Fergus gas terminal which takes gas from North Sea fields via 3 major pipelines (Frigg, FLAGS and SAGE) and processes it before it enters the national grid. It's operated by Total, Shell and Apache and handles about 25% of UK's gas supply.

About 5 miles further on, you reach the hamlet of Crimmond. Turn off right by the church and follow the road signs to the RSPB reserve at the Loch of Strathbeg. Our 4th stop is at Britain's largest dune loch which is home to 20% of the world population of pink footed geese, although there are plenty of other waterfowl to spot. The RSPB centre provides a good viewing area and you might see some wild ponies which inhabit the reserve.



Flying on, we return to the A90 and continue north for about 1.5 miles where you will reach the junction with the B9032 signposted to Memsie. Continue straight over the crossroads with the A981 at Memsie and then, some 2 miles further on, straight over the junction with the A98 at Mid Ardlaw signposted to New Aberdour. This B9032 joins the B9031 some 2 miles beyond Mid Ardlaw and the road continues now as the B9031. Continue on the B9031 past New Aberdour for about 0.5 mile and turn off at the junction signposted to New Aberdour beach. It's a steep narrow road down to the car park, our 5th stopping point.

It's a beautiful sandy beach, which is generally pretty deserted but at the east end, there are interesting caves and rock pools to explore. The location was filmed in the 2016 version of the film, "Whisky Galore".

When you leave the beach, don't return all the way back to New Aberdour but just after you pass the church on the steep road up, turn off right at the signpost to Bankhead. This will eventually take you back (3 miles) to join the B9031 where you will turn right at the junction towards Macduff. You will bypass Pennan on your right and if you've never seen it, you might want to take a further detour down to Pennan itself to view the hotel and red phone-box, made famous in Bill Forsyth's film, "Local hero". A plaque on the wall by the door records this.



2 miles further west of Pennan on the B9031, you will see a road-sign to Troup Head nature reserve. The single-track road takes you to Northfield farm, the yard of which you pass through, till you reach a dirt track leading to the nature reserve car park; our 6th stopping point of interest. There is a path leading to Troup Head which is home to the largest UK mainland colony of gannets. There are also thousands of kittiwakes, guillemots, razorbills as well as puffins but you might also be lucky to see porpoises, minke whales and common dolphins, all of which regularly frequent these seas. The walk is about 1 mile to the viewpoint.

Note that there is no visitor centre or toilet facilities here. This is our last stopping point by the coast and we're heading inland thereafter to make our final stop. After leaving Troup Head, return by the same road to the B9031 and turn left to return to New Aberdour.

Rather than continuing on the B9031, turn off right to pass through the village centre on the road towards Strichen. It's a decent straightish road, although it is not numbered. You will cross straight over the junction with the A98 at Marchlands and then you will come to a junction with the A981 some 6 miles after leaving New Aberdour. Turn right onto the A981 but as you come to Strichen itself, turn left on the B9093 signposted to Mintlaw. You will reach a junction with the A92 after 4 miles on the B9093. After the junction, it's only 2 miles to Mintlaw, where you need to turn right at the crossroads onto the A950. Then after just less than 1 mile, turn off left into Aden Country Park.



Our 8th and last stop is at the Aberdeenshire Farming Museum in a semi-circular steading, features displays of life on the estate in the early 20th century as well as an exhibition titled "Weel vrocht grun" (Doric for well worked ground). This tells the story of NE Scotland farming over the last 200 years and has an interesting collection of all types of farm implements and machinery. 45 minutes is a good time to spend here.

Our suggested route home, is to stay on the B9030 through Stuartfield to Auchnagatt, where you can join the A948 south to Ellon. It's a good fast road with a nice surface and sweeping bends. The road bypasses Ellon and joins the A90 to Aberdeen.

We hope you enjoy our **A Buchan Boorach** route in our "Oot an' Aboot" series. We recognise that there are a lot of places to cover, so you might want to break this route up into several stages, depending on the time you want to spend at each place. Our "Circles around Mintlaw" and some of the locations in our "EYE-SPY - Stevenson Lighthouses" and "- Ruined Towers" drives are also in Buchan and could also be tied-in, therefore.

Planning: Please check the websites for the Peterhead Prison, RSPB Strathbeg and Aberdeenshire Agricultural Museum because their opening times can vary during different times of the year. Troup Head is best visited in spring or summer.